

THROUGH AN ACCIDENT.

BY FRANK LEE BENEDICT.



LITTLE Edna Blake had been over to see Mrs. Mozier and carry a package of toys to the old body's lame grandchild.

Edna was not in the least like the preternaturally good children in books, who delight in self-sacrifice and beg to give away their dinners to poor people; but she was a generous open-hearted small creature, all the same. She hugely enjoyed a visit to the quaint brown house, for Mrs. Mozier could tell wonderful stories about things that happened early in the century, being almost as old. Then, too, she recollected Edna's great-grandfather—which seemed a marvelous thing—and had many interesting incidents to relate in regard to intervening generations of Blakes who had been dust and ashes years ago.

It was a gorgeous December morning; the snow in the lane crunched delightfully under her feet, and Edna danced along, singing from very lightness of heart.

As she reached the high-road, she saw a big old-fashioned "carry-all" approaching; for, though the snow lay thick in the lane, the turnpike offered no inducement for using a sleigh.

"That's Mr. Bentham's carry-all," thought Edna; "it can't be the old gentleman—he'd never let Matthew drive so fast! If Carl Medway were staying at the house, I should know it was he."

On came the vehicle; a handsome young man looked out from under the half-raised curtain, and a cheery voice called:

"Stop, Matthew! Why, Edna, is that you?"

"It is Carl!" cried the little girl, clapping her hands joyfully. "Oh, when did you come? I am so glad! And where are you going? Oh, Carl, Flossie has four such beautiful puppies—you shall have one—and grandma says—"

By this time, the carriage had stopped; the young fellow sprang out, gave Edna a hearty hug, and lifted her into the back seat.

"You can tell me all your news at your leisure," he said; "I am going over to your house."

"Oh, grandma will be so pleased and so surprised. Why, we didn't dream of your being at your uncle's."

"I only got there last night, and am obliged to go back to the city to-day."

"Oh! that is too bad."

"Yes; but it's useless to waste time in laments, little woman," he rejoined, with a laugh and a sigh. "Is the grandmother well?"

"Oh, quite well; she'll be so glad to see you."

"I suppose she has visitors? she usually has at this season."

"There's nobody there yet, but—"

"Nobody?" he interrupted, with a ring of impatient unbelief in his voice.

"Except Miss Phillips; but, of course, she don't count as a visitor—she's been there for a couple of months. Oh, she's lovely, Carl; such a pretty name, too—Landrey—isn't it, and so odd?"

"Landrey Phillips," the young man repeated softly, lingering over the syllables as if they possessed some subtle sweetness for him.

"Did you know she was at our house?" Edna questioned.

"Not till my uncle told me, last evening," Medway answered, a sudden flush rising in his olive cheeks, while his brown eyes shone with an eager light.

"Why, you used to be acquainted with her—I'd forgot!" cried Edna. "You met her at Colney Springs, one summer."

"Pray, how did you happen to know that, you small witch?" he asked. "Yes, I met her; but—but I dare say she has forgotten all about me."

"No," Edna asserted, shaking her head. "That's how I knew you used to be acquainted! Grandma was speaking of you one day, and she said she had met you; I've often talked about you since."

"And—and what did she say?"

"Not much—nothing, I think," Edna admitted, after an instant's cogitation; "but she always listens! Oh, of course, she liked you; grandma says no woman could help it."

"Well, that's good to hear, at all events," Medway replied, with a merry laugh in which Edna joined. He drew a deep breath; there was a look of infinite content and yet infinite eagerness in his handsome face. "Now tell me everything about your doings! In a little while, I can ask Miss Landrey Phillips herself whether—whether she likes me. How did it come about that I found you standing alone at the head of the lane, like a second Red Riding-hood?"

"Why, I drove over in the dog-cart with James; he had to go to the village. I've been to see old Mrs. Mozier and her granddaughter—don't you remember Lena?"

"Oh, yes! So you're doing the little Sister of Charity this morning!"

"No, no, please don't!" pleaded Edna. "Oh, how you used to tease me when I was a tiny mite, and call me that just because I divided the playthings you gave me with Lena Mozier. Grandma taught me; she says it's the way to be happy—to share with other people—and she knows! Only, Carl, I can't make up my mind to give away my dolls—I really can't!"

"Sacrifice must stop somewhere," he said, lightly. "Well, tell me about the pony and the puppies—oh, and how is blessed Aunt Betty, the housekeeper?"

Edna began to talk very fast; but, though Carl Medway nodded his head, smiled, and uttered appropriate exclamations now and then, his eyes wore an absent dreamy expression which showed plainly that his thoughts were elsewhere.

He was going over every incident of his acquaintance with Landrey Phillips, from the evening they first met, nearly eighteen months before. He had fallen in love with her the moment he saw her at the quiet watering-place where she had come with her invalid step-mother.

The entire period that the pair were thrown together had barely covered the space of five weeks; but, residing in the same hotel, they saw each other almost constantly each day, and two imaginative young persons can live a great deal in five weeks.

Medway was called unexpectedly away, and, during their hurried parting in the pres-

ence of indifferent acquaintances, he had no opportunity, if he had meant to do so, to utter a word which might tell her of his love. But indeed it is doubtful if he would have spoken, for, though only four-and-twenty, he entertained very old-fashioned ideas of duty. He was not even in business for himself, and, while earning a liberal salary, he had at that time claims on him in the shape of dependent relatives. As he could not marry then, he would not have considered it right to ask any girl to bind herself to wait for a future so uncertain as his to become a reality.

He had, however, invented an excuse for writing to Miss Phillips, and she answered his letter. He had written again, and so a not too frequent correspondence was established between them. But, during the last three months, he had heard nothing. Two of his letters remained unacknowledged, and he could only suffer and wonder whether caprice had caused her silence, or whether, carefully as he had tried to write, he might have offended her by some unconscious betrayal of his true feelings.

In the midst of this trouble and heart-ache, unexpected changes had come into his life. An opportunity offered for him to go into business in California, with a certainty of such success that he must in a few years realize, if not great wealth, at least a comfortable fortune even for our expensive days. In order to complete his arrangements, it had been necessary to sell some land he owned in Michigan, and an opportunity to do this presented itself just at the time he needed the money, as often happens to young men in novels, and not unseldom in real life, when fate chances to feel kindly disposed.

His uncle, Homer Bentham—the most crotchety of hypochondriac old bachelors—who lived in the heart of one of Pennsylvania's picturesque valleys, was part owner of the land. First, this cross-grained hermit's consent to sell had to be obtained, and, though for years he had been grumbling because he could not, it was difficult to bring him to the point; but, after many tedious delays, Carl had succeeded in settling the matter.

On the previous evening, he had arrived by appointment at his relative's house, and the crabbed recluse had actually signed the deed, though it required an hour and a half, after he took up the pen, to persuade him to do so.

Medway's future was secure, and he at liberty now to seek Landrey Phillips and tell her of his love. Just before bed-time, he discovered that she was actually living in the neighborhood. He had been asking news of his little pet Edna and his old friend Mrs. Blake—about the only person in the township whom the misanthrope ever honored with a visit.

"They are both well," Mr. Bentham replied. "Edna stopped in to see me not long ago; she had a new governess with her—very nice, for a girl, she seemed. I used to know her father; he was a fool, was John Phillips, but I fancy the daughter takes after her mother—has the same name, too—Landrey."

Carl absolutely jumped.

"Did you say Landrey Phillips?" he cried.

"Yes. Don't shout so! Edna said you'd met her. The step-mother died suddenly—she lived on an annuity. I didn't ask questions—I remembered. Of course, the girl hadn't a penny; lucky to get with Mrs. Blake—she's a very decent old woman."

Further inquiries were ruthlessly cut short; he scolded Carl for keeping him up so far beyond his usual hour, and retired to his chamber.

The young fellow spent a sleepless night; he was too full of excitement and seeing too many beautiful visions to waste time in slumber. This morning, he had started to find Landrey. He could not help being hopeful—nay, almost confident of success. Destiny must have arranged everything; she could not have brought about such unexpected possibilities of happiness merely to turn cruel at the last. So he had set forth on his drive in a state of such blissful anticipation that the whole world looked glorified. As an additional pleasure, he had encountered his little favorite and—

But he must learn more about Landrey Phillips. At first, he had heard his voice tremble so when he pronounced her name that he feared his agitation would be apparent even to this child of ten; but he could control himself sufficiently now to speak of her with apparent calmness.

"How did you expect to get home?" he asked, abruptly.

"Oh, I meant to walk down to Mrs. Beaumont's, and grandma and Miss Phillips were to stop for me when they go to drive. I'm

so, so glad I met you! I can see Alice Beaumont any day, but you can't be got at so easily," Edna explained, in her usual voluble fashion.

"You are the most delightful small woman in the world, and the best!" Carl averred.

"I don't know. I'm pretty bad sometimes," Edna replied, in a doubtful tone. "But I like you—and so does grandma."

"A sure proof that you and grandma must be epitomes of all that is charming," Carl said. "But your—Miss Landrey Phillips—she never admits that you are bad, does she?"

"Oh, nobody could be bad before her—she's so lovely!" cried Edna. "Why, it makes me good just to be with her! Sometimes I'm afraid I'm horrid deceitful, I behave so much better with her than with the others."

"You over-conscientious mite!" laughed Carl. "Then I suppose doing lessons with her is a pleasure."

"Yes, indeed; though she makes me study them thoroughly," rejoined Edna, with one of her wise little nods. "But then she can explain things so clearly that they seem easy—oh, there never was anybody like her for that."

"Why, what a fortunate young princess you are, to have had such a pearl of an instructress sent your way," Carl said, with another happy laugh.

"Only it makes me shiver to think what will become of me when she goes," sighed Edna; "and, of course, she can't stay teaching me forever."

"Of course not!" Medway echoed, in a positive tone.

"But she won't go yet—she has promised. She is very fond of grandma, and, while she is in mourning, maybe we can coax her to stay," Edna went on. "But so many people are all the while inviting her, and she wants to travel in Europe, and—"

"But how would she manage that?" Carl interrupted.

"Good gracious, can't she go anywhere she likes?" demanded Edna. "If only grandma were younger, she'd like to go—oh, that would be delightful! What I shall do when Landrey does leave us, I can't think! Of course, no real governess could seem like her—and school would be dreadful."

"What do you mean by a real governess?"

Carl asked. "Isn't Miss Phillips real enough?"

"Oh, yes; it is only the governess part that's make-believe—don't you understand?"

"Not in the least," he answered, impatiently. "You said she was a wonderful teacher."

"So she is; but helping me just to have a pretense, as she says, for not feeling herself idle and useless, is a different thing from being a governess for the money."

"All the same, I suppose the money is very acceptable," said Carl, with a puzzled air.

Edna burst into a peal of merry laughter.

"It sounds so funny!" she cried. "Why, Miss Phillips has more than she knows what to do with—she could build a palace if she liked—don't you know?"

"I don't!" Medway exclaimed, sharply. "Money—"

"Lots and lots! Why, she's a great heiress! You hadn't heard that from your uncle?"

"I hadn't heard that," Carl replied, in an odd choked voice.

"Oh, dear, yes," Edna hurried on. "About the time her step-mother died, some relative in South America left her—oh, I don't know how much—hundreds and hundreds of thousands of dollars."

"Hundreds and hundreds of thousands?" Carl repeated, in the same stifled voice.

"After all, very likely grandma said nothing to your uncle—Landrey hates to have her money talked about," Edna observed, "and Mr. Bentham never sees people—he might as well live in a cave, for all he knows about his neighbors."

"Ah!" shivered Medway. "Well?"

"Oh, about Landrey? Why, she and grandma got acquainted when we were in Washington last spring, and she agreed to be my real governess—for she knew her step-mother couldn't live long—and she was poor then—you know?"

A queer inarticulate sound in Medway's throat was all the response the child could wait for, in her eagerness to continue her recital.

"So, when the money was left her and her step-mother died, she came to us, all the same. She and grandma had grown such friends—and Landrey said she was so lonely! And she is very happy with us—she says so! Maybe we'll manage to keep near her—grandma would go almost anywhere to do that."

Carl Medway sat staring straight before him with white face and strained eyes, while the little girl poured out her confidences.

"An heiress!" he was thinking. "And I meant to ask her to marry me—to share my home out on the Pacific coast! Of course, she'd have supposed I came because I had heard she was rich—how she would have despised me! I am saved that shame, anyhow; but—but— Oh, if anybody's heart could break in these days, I should think mine was breaking!"

Edna's voice sounded gayly in his ear; the sun shone; the air was soft and still; earth and sky made a picture of beauty and peace—and he sitting there with his dream-world in ruins at his feet!

It was so sudden, and only last night his cherished hope had seemed so near the possibility of fulfillment; for she had cared a little—she must have done so—and he should win his happiness. All was over; his dream was dead; life itself looked so, in the first horrible bitterness of the unexpected blow.

They had reached the top of a high hill which commanded a view for miles and miles over the wintry landscape glorified by the morning sun. At the foot, two roads intersected the turnpike. The one to the right led to Mrs. Blake's house, the gabled roofs of which were visible in the distance among the trees. The road to the left made a short cut to the station, while the turnpike led through the little village.

A feathery spray of blue smoke curled slowly up above the railway-track that ran away below across the meadow-lands; a whistle sounded faintly through the still air. Old Matthew turned in his seat and said:

"You'd have been in time for the half-past eleven express, Mr. Carl, if ye'd wanted to catch it."

"What time will the next pass?" Carl asked.

"Not till half-past three—no, four," said Matthew.

"That will be too late!" Medway cried, with a despairing ring in his voice which fairly startled both listeners. "Matthew, drive right down to the station—I must catch the express."

"Oh, Carl, Carl!" moaned Edna.

"Don't say a word, child!" he exclaimed, with smothered violence. "I can't go to the house—I can't!"

"Oh, Carl, Carl!" Edna repeated, then stopped, afraid of teasing him, and indeed so stunned by this sudden change in affairs that she could not even ask questions or express her sorrow.

"Go ahead, Matthew!" Carl cried, authoritatively. "Get to the station as quick as you can."

"There's plenty of time," the old man answered. "You'll have nigh half an hour to wait. It's all up grade from Turner's, and the train is only getting there now. I'm going to let the beasts blow a minute—this hill is a hard pull, I tell you."

"Oh, can't you wait, Carl—can't you?" Edna could not help asking once more.

"No, no; don't cry, child—don't, please!" he exclaimed. "I've just remembered something—I must catch the train. Don't tease me, Edna—don't!"

"I won't, I won't!" she replied, choking down her sobs.

"Good child—dear Edna!" he said, patting her shoulder. Afraid to trust himself to speak further, he began pulling out of his overcoat pocket some letters which he had written on the previous night.

"You want to mail those?" Edna said.

"Yes; but I haven't time to drive by the village—Matthew will go back that way, and you can drop them in the office for me, like the good little fairy you are."

"I will," Edna answered, turning away her head to wipe her eyes.

Medway was looking at his letters; they were all on matters of business except one, which he had left unsealed. That was addressed to his sole confidential friend, telling of the delightful discovery which had awaited him on his arrival at his uncle's house—of the visit he meant to make in the morning.

"I will scribble another line after it is over," he had written: "you shall hear what my fate is."

He drew the letter from the envelope and glanced at that paragraph. His heart seemed searing under the touch of white-hot iron; his head rang as if a score of great bells were pealing through it.

He took his pencil and hastily scrawled a few paragraphs in the blank space on the last page, then he put the sheet back into the wrapper.

Matthew gave the word to the horses, and

they soon reached the foot of the hill. Carl glanced down at the little girl with her tearful eyes and her sorrowful mouth.

"Don't mind, Edna," he said; "try not to mind—I shall come back, you know."

"But it may be a long while first!" she sighed.

"You're such a good little thing, to be sorry," he said, drearily.

"Grandma will be, too!" said Edna.

"Oh, tell her I was very, very sorry that I could not call," he rejoined, rousing himself to try and make some civil-sounding speech; "very sorry, and—oh, give her all sorts of good wishes from me."

"And what shall I tell Landrey—Miss Phillips?" questioned Edna, with a fresh sob in her voice.

"Ah, L—Miss Phillips? Oh, it is so long since we met that I dare say she has forgotten—"

"She never forgets anybody!"

"Well, well, if she is good enough to ask about me, you will give her my compliments," he answered, with a bitter laugh.

The carriage drew up at the station platform just as the coming train rounded the nearest curve.

"We've hit it exactly!" Matthew exclaimed, exultantly, as he got out of the wagon and pulled Medway's valise from under the front seat. "You'll jest have time comfortably to get your ticket."

"Oh, Carl, Carl—it is too, too bad!" moaned Edna, flinging her arms about his neck. "But you will come back in the spring, won't you? You always come then."

"Oh, we have lots of springs before us," he said, quickly. "Good-bye now, little one—you're the dearest child in the world. Good-bye."

"The letters, Carl!" cried Edna. "Oh! here they are, on the seat. I'll put them in the box myself."

He freed himself from her embrace and hurried off, with another brief farewell.

"I'll start before the train comes, Miss Edna," said Matthew; "the horses never will get used to a ingine: it's the only thing that ever scares them."

The old man had several errands in the village, so he left Edna at the post-office while he transacted them. The little girl put the letters into the box with scrupulous care and then walked about the office,

trying to distract her mind from her late disappointment. Old Mrs. Welcome, the post-mistress, sold stationery, and Edna remembered that her grandmother wanted mucilage.

She had left her purse in her satchel, in the carriage; she went out and climbed into the back seat in search of it. She perceived a letter lying among the buffalo-robos.

"How lucky I saw it!" she thought. "I remember now there were four. How careless of me!"

As she climbed down, she stumbled; the letter dropped from her hand and fell into the horse-trough close by. Edna gave a little shriek of dismay and snatched it; but the envelope was so wet that all she could do was to tear it off and put the letter in her pocket—her grandmother would re-direct it and make her excuses to Carl.

It was one o'clock when Matthew deposited Edna at home. She found her grandmother and Miss Phillips at the luncheon-table, and with them a couple of guests. She explained how it happened that she had not gone to wait at Mrs. Beaumont's, and her grandmother was loud in her expressions of regret at having missed a sight of Carl.

"Couldn't possibly come on?" she asked. "He might have taken the four-o'clock train, I should think."

"But he couldn't wait—he decided that all in a hurry," Edna explained. "Oh! and he sent ever so many good wishes to you, grandma."

"He's the dearest, best boy in the world!" cried the old lady. And the two visitors, both of whom lived in the neighborhood, joined in her epcomiums; but Miss Phillips spoke no word.

"We were talking about him only the other day, Landrey," observed Mrs. Blake, turning toward her. "You liked him, too."

The stately young lady whom she addressed had scarcely opened her lips since Edna's entrance. Had her companions been looking at her, they might have seen her grow scarlet, then pale, at the mention of Carl Medway's name; but, by the time the hostess attracted attention to her, Miss Phillips had regained her composure.

"I liked him very much," she replied, quietly.

"Did you tell him Miss Phillips was visiting us, Edna?" Mrs. Blake asked.

"Oh, he knew it already—from his uncle," Edna explained. "He seemed so pleased; he wanted to see her."

"Was that his message?" demanded her grandmother, laughing.

"Oh, no! He said very likely she had forgotten all about him; but I told him she had not: so he said, if she inquired, I was to give her his compliments," Edna rejoined, volubly.

"Well, he was a wretch, not to come and see us!" observed Mrs. Blake, as she rose from the table. "Landrey, you must get your bonnet on. If we are to drive to Gray's Hill with Mrs. Ashton and Jane, we ought to start at once. Edna, you've had driving enough for one day. Oh, the Peters children will be here by and by, so you'll not miss us. Mind you don't set the house on fire or do any other terrible mischief in our absence."

Edna's small friends soon arrived, and, as they did not leave until dusk, she was too much occupied to remember the letter she had picked up. Indeed, if she had done so, she would have found no opportunity to mention the matter to her grandmother or Miss Phillips, as the five-o'clock train brought several guests; and the two ladies were, of course, engaged during the entire evening.

It was late when Landrey Phillips went to her own rooms and sat down by the open fire, to rest and meditate before she began to undress. Very lovely she looked, in her soft creamy-white gown, with her delicate complexion, clear-cut features, and rather melancholy mouth. A physiognomist would only have needed a single glance to decide that Landrey Phillips was no ordinary character. Although but one-and-twenty, she had borne cares and responsibilities which early developed her into a strong self-reliant woman. Life had in many ways been hard on her. Almost the sole bright spot in the memories of the past few years had been those weeks spent at Colney Springs, and they had owed their charm to Carl Medway's society.

With the reticence of a nature like hers, she had never admitted to herself that she loved the handsome young fellow, with his earnest eyes, his poetical talk, his high hopes and aspirations. During these last three months, however, since fortune had

so unexpectedly come to her, she had looked forward with vague restless eagerness to the spring, which she knew would bring him into the neighborhood. They had told her that he always paid his uncle a yearly visit—and perhaps, half unconsciously, this certainty formed one of the inducements which decided her to accept Mrs. Blake's invitation for the winter.

Landrey sat pondering over the oddity of Carl Medway's conduct, in not coming to the house that morning. To get so near, then suddenly decide it was absolutely imperative he should catch the noon train! And Edna was to give her his compliments, if—if she asked about him! It was all very, very strange—inexplicable.

For some time past, she had been surprised that he sent her no tidings. In the anxiety and constant occupation of the closing weeks of her step-mother's life, she found no leisure to answer a letter she received from him, telling her that he had removed from Philadelphia to New York. When she was able to write, she discovered that she had mislaid his epistle and could not remember his new address.

Soon after her arrival at Mrs. Blake's house, she learned that his uncle lived in the neighborhood, though it was a good while before she saw him. She got Carl's address, however, and wrote her letter, which received no reply; it never reached Medway, but she could not know that.

There seemed no reason to assign for his silence, unless it might be that he had found new and engrossing interests, and so could give no time to a merely friendly correspondence. It was the bitterness this thought roused which showed Landrey how deep an impression Carl Medway had made on her heart. These last weeks had held much secret pain and mortification, but she was too brave to call life barren because a half-developed hope was never to find fruition.

"He did not care for me," was her reflection, as she sat by the fire. "Well, I could have cared—but I must learn to forget that! It was pleasant, though, when this fortune came, to think it might—might— Oh, well, Landrey Phillips, you have done with visions—it would be too silly and weak to waste time grieving over what might have been if everything had been different! He did not care—and I thought he did—that's all! It is not

his fault that he couldn't; it is no shame to me that I did—and I won't be ashamed, any more than I will make myself idiotic and wretched because my dream ended as dreams must—in waking."

She rose and began to prepare for bed. Her dressing-room was next to Edna's bed-chamber, and, as usual, she peeped in to make sure the little girl was sleeping quietly. Edna had a horror of the dark, and her grandmother, like a sensible woman, allowed her to have a night-lamp. There was light enough to show clearly the sweet face on the pillow, and Landrey stood for a few instants gazing at the child to whom she had become warmly attached.

As she turned to go, her fastidious taste was disturbed by the sight of Edna's jacket and hat lying on a chair.

"That is the fault of the careless new chambermaid," she thought. "Such a bad example for Edna—the things have been left there ever since she came home from the station."

Afraid to disturb the sleeper by opening the wardrobe, Landrey carried the coat into her dressing-room. As she shook the thick garment preparatory to hanging it up in her orderly fashion, a folded sheet of paper fell out of one of the pockets.

"Her French translation," thought Landrey; "she must have meant to give it to me as she went out this morning, and forgot it. I may as well look it over; it's too good an excuse for staying up awhile longer to be neglected—and I'm not a bit sleepy."

She heaved a sigh, sat down in an easy-chair by her writing-table, and again fell into deep and painful reverie, from which the clock roused her by striking one. Landrey started, indulged in a little mental self-reproach, then, just to get away from thought for a moment, she unfolded the sheet and began to read.

The opening lines riveted her attention; she saw her own name; she recognized Carl Medway's writing. Before she realized what she was doing, her eye had glanced over the pages:

"Imagine—try to—what I felt when I found that Landrey Phillips was living in the neighborhood. Since her step-mother's death, she has had to earn her living—is a governess. My dyspeptic old uncle could tell me so much; he had even seen her once or

twice. It is a comfort to know she has been with so kind a woman as her present employer. Only fancy, if Mrs. Blake had not been an old friend—the very first person I inquired about—I might have gone away without even learning that Landrey was in the neighborhood.

"Oh, how confusedly I tell it all—no matter! Do you wonder that I take finding her near as a good omen? I told you I knew there must be some reason for her silence—well, I shall learn it to-morrow! And to discover her now, just when the change in my position gives me, from a worldly point of view, a right to say to her: 'I have loved you from the first moment we met! I was very poor then—I could not ask you to bind yourself; but now—now—'

"How crazy it sounds—never mind! You may laugh, but you will sympathize with me just the same. Oh, if only she can learn to care! And she will—she must—our meeting again is the work of destiny! I shall leave the envelope open—either way, you shall hear the result of my visit."

Much of the letter Landrey Phillips had read before she in the least recollected that she was examining a paper not meant for her inspection. When this reflection came, another quickly succeeded. No ordinary rule of action could possess any weight in a case like this. Not meant for her? Oh, yes—it was her right to read. This was indeed the work of destiny.

And, on the outer page, she found the half-illegible lines Carl Medway had scribbled in the first moment of his despairing determination to go away at once:

"It is all over. She is rich—a great heiress. I can't even see her; I could not hold my tongue if I did; and she would despise me. Don't you see? I come here: I find she has inherited a fortune: and I tell her of my love. Of course, no human being could believe I had not been influenced by the discovery.

"That bat of an uncle of mine has heard Mrs. Medway say that Miss Phillips taught

Edna—so took it for granted that she was the governess.

"Oh, it is all over—I am off to catch the train; I shall start for California within the week; I can't come to see you. Good-bye."

The next morning, when Edna woke, she saw Miss Phillips standing by her bed, looking pretty and happy enough to have served a painter as a model for Aurora.

"This letter dropped out of your coat-pocket, my dear," Landrey said, holding up the folded sheet.

"Oh, it is Carl's! I forgot it!" cried Edna. "You see, he had several to post; he asked me to leave them at the office as I came back. Oh, dear! it was very careless of me—but you were at luncheon, and then the girls came, and it never entered my head. And the envelope was all wet—"

"There was none," Miss Phillips said.

"Oh, I remember: I put it in another pocket, for fear it would spoil the letter!" cried Edna. "That dreadful trough, just in the way—set there, I should think, to drown people!"

Then she explained the disaster, upbraided herself anew, and burst into fresh wonderment and regret over Carl Medway's abrupt departure.

"He changed so quick—he had been so full of fun," she went on. "And he looked so pale; he scribbled something in one of his letters with a pencil, and his hand shook till he could hardly write. Oh, I'm afraid, too, he'll think I was horribly careless. And really it wasn't my fault—I stumbled."

"There, there, my dear—don't be troubled; it shall all be explained," Miss Phillips said, giving her a kiss. "Here comes Martha. I'll attend to the letter myself."

This was the telegram which, a few hours later, lifted Carl Medway out of the night of despair into the broad sunshine of hope and happiness:

"Through an accident, a letter you finished the morning you left here has fallen into my hands. Will you come for it?

LANDREY PHILLIPS."

OUR DEEDS.

WE die not at all, for our deeds remain—
To crown with honor or mar with shame;
VOL. XCVII—5.

Through endless sequence of years to come,
Our lives shall speak when our lips are dumb.

PETERSON'S MAGAZINE.

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No. 2.

HIS COUSIN ETHEL.

BY GEORGIA GRANT.



IF "all the world's a stage and all the men and women merely players," each one must have some particular role to fill, which nobody else could take quite so well. In acting

out our characters we thus unconsciously have our share in the drama of life.

Ethel Farrington was one of those women who are always playing the part of guardian angel to someone. Up to her eighteenth year, she acted in that capacity to her father, who had been a widower and the rector of Thornhurst for more than seventeen years.

Then, one dreary winter morning, the good old man was stricken with heart-disease, and Ethel found herself an almost penniless orphan. It was at this time that Mr. Darrell, of Darrell Hall, Yorkshire, who had married her mother's only sister, sent for her to come and live with him.

"Of course, you will not go," said Lady Thornhurst, who had been the rector's patroness and friend. She had exercised a kindly though somewhat tyrannical supervision over his daughter, and, on the death of her natural protector, had taken her to Thornhurst.

"Why not?" said Ethel, in surprise—she knew very little about her uncle. "He is the

only relative I have in the world," and the girl's voice faltered, as a sense of loneliness came over her.

"He isn't much of a relative—only by marriage; and both he and his son are anything but respectable members of society. It would be as much as your reputation is worth," cried her ladyship, who had hitherto held her tongue on the subject and was glad to speak out, "to go live with those two dissipated men," and she proceeded to free her mind on the subject of the Darrells of Darrell Hall.

In view of all her friend said, Ethel gave up the idea, and, in response to the kind things the former added about making Thornhurst her home, was very grateful. For the present, she could not but accept the invitation, but she silently resolved that her stay should be only temporary.

Autumn came, however, before Ethel succeeded in finding a place as governess, and, just as she was about to take a position which offered, there arrived word from Darrell Hall that her uncle had had a stroke of paralysis. Then she announced to her friend her intention of going there.

"You surely cannot mean it!" remonstrated Lady Thornhurst; "let his son take care of him."

But the idea of leaving an invalid to the tender mercies of another man, and particularly such a man as her ladyship had represented the younger Darrell to be, was more than Ethel's tender heart could bear. She knew she was not needed at Thornhurst Hall, where housekeeper and maid did everything that was required; so, after writing to her uncle and receiving a grateful letter from her cousin, she prepared to depart. One conces-

sion she made to her displeased protectress, in securing an elderly and highly respectable widow as a sort of companion rather than maid, for her scanty income was augmented by a generous gift from her uncle.

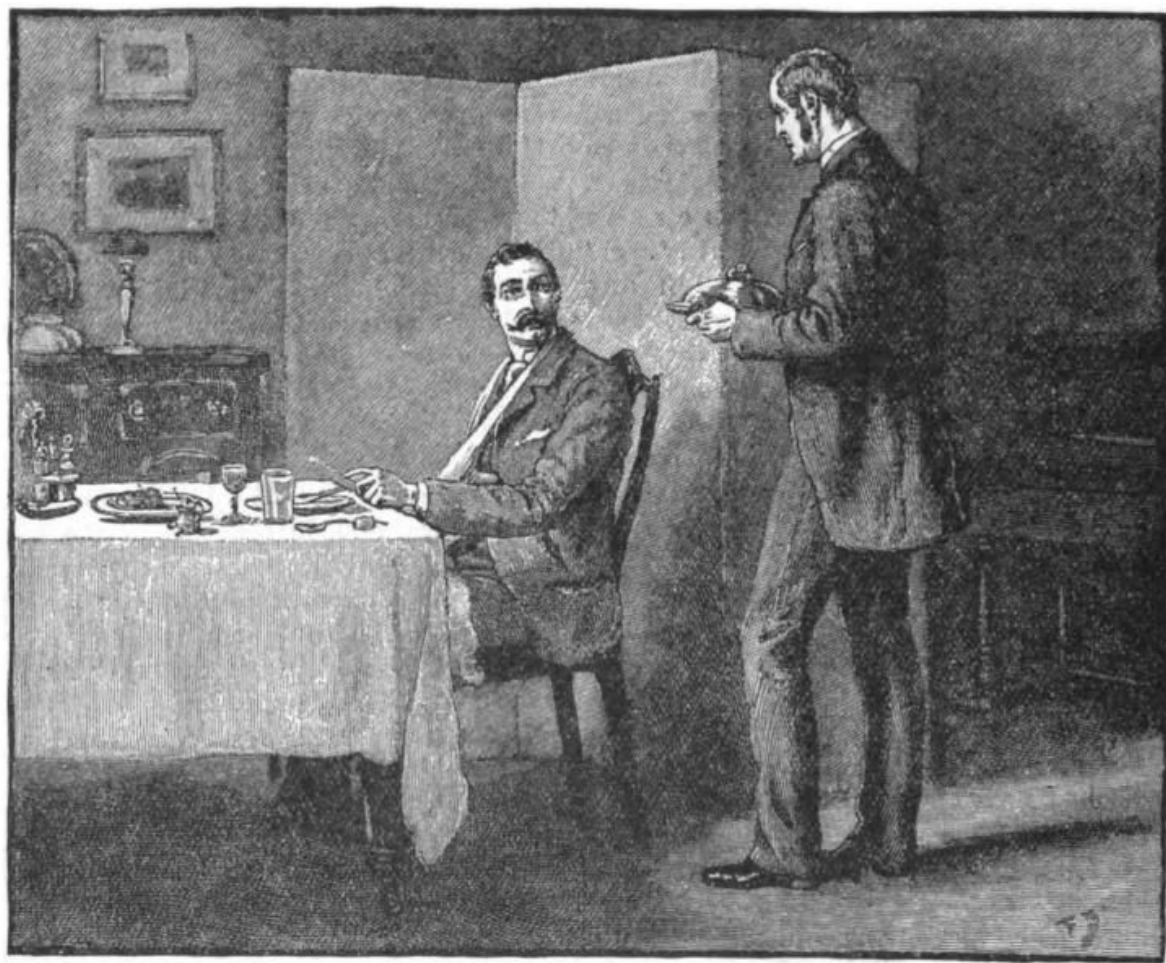
Lady Thornhurst, even in her vexation, did not insinuate that any mercenary motives influenced Ethel, so they parted in a friendly though somewhat cold manner.

Arrived at her destination, Ethel found waiting for her a tall good-looking man, with a dog-cart. He was not more than twenty-

remained always with her through everything that happened afterward.

During the two-mile drive to the hall, the pair said little; but, when young Darrell helped Ethel out of the cart and led her up the steps, he repeated his cordial greeting, adding to his "Welcome!" the words "to Darrell Hotel." Somehow Ethel did not find the beginning so inauspicious as she had expected it to be.

Her meeting with her uncle was hardly so propitious—the elderly man did not receive



eight, but his face bore lines that an experienced eye could have seen were not the marks of age.

"Welcome, cousin," he cried, cordially, hurrying toward her and taking both her little cold hands in his. "It was very good of you to come."

Somehow, a sense of nearness, of relationship, such as Lady Thornhurst's domineering kindness had never brought, stole over the girl, and the tears stood in her eyes, but did not fall. The memory of this first meeting and of her new relative's cousinliness

her very graciously; but pity for his comparative helplessness stirred Ethel's heart, and she could but overlook his seeming want of cordiality.

"Besides," as she told herself, "I did not come here for my own pleasure—and he married my mother's only sister."

Ethel soon found plenty to do at Darrell Hall, where, though much money was wasted, there was little comfort. She waited faithfully on her uncle, who received her ministrations with grudging thanks, yet, in spite of himself, appreciated them. With his rather

unwilling consent, she took upon herself the office of housekeeper, and soon order reigned in the hitherto neglected establishment. Of her cousin, she saw comparatively little, and her life would have been lonely had it not been too busy. Young Darrell's outgoings and incomings were somewhat irregular. Sometimes he would dine with her for a week, then disappear for that length of time.

It was during one of these periodical disappearances that Lynn Darrell, breakfasting alone in his sitting-room and waited on by his faithful old servant, Drummond, reflected on many things. In a break-neck hunt, he had managed to sprain his arm, and his musings were not so lively as usual. Presently, however, he hazarded a joke to Drummond.

"I think of turning over a new leaf—settling down and marrying," he said, looking toward his man as he entered with a covered dish in his hand.

"Indeed, sir, an' it 'd be the best thing ye could do for yerself," was the somewhat unexpected reply.

"You think so, Drummond?"

"Yes'r, if ye choose the right lady."

"And have you the future Mrs. Darrell already selected?" the young man next inquired, amusement in his tones.

"Ye wouldn't 'ev to look very far fur'er, Mr. Lynn," was the prompt response.

"You mean—" began young Darrell, really astonished.

"I don't mean to be impertinent, sir, but ye wouldn't 'ev to go out of the 'ouse."

After this remark, the subject was not pursued. Lynn ate his breakfast in silence, absorbed in his own thoughts.

A few weeks later, winter set in in real earnest. One of the snowy days which followed, Lynn drove to the village. As he came home, he passed a group of forlorn houses which belonged to some wretchedly poor people. No object was visible save a shivering cow. Just as he got by, however, he saw a woman's figure in the distance. On nearer approach, he recognized it to be his cousin.

"Ethel," he called, and she turned in surprise. "Let me drive you home—it is growing colder," and she accepted his invitation with her usual graciousness. "Is it allowable to ask what you were doing in this forsaken part of the village?" he laughingly inquired, as he tucked the rugs about his companion.

"Only visiting some sick people here," answered Ethel, in a hesitating way, blushing as if she were confessing a crime.

Lynn glanced curiously at her—she was a new type to him—growing to be almost a wonder. The rest of the drive home, he was strangely silent.

The winter slipped quietly away and March came. Ethel and her cousin were on excellent terms. She fancied his mysterious disappearances were less frequent, and certainly his manner toward her was unexceptionable—kind, gentle, but perfectly respectful. A new hope—very welcome, but which she hardly dared utter, even to herself, for fear its fruition might not come—entered her heart: a hope that not merely Lynn's outward manner, but also his mode of life, was changing for the better.

One day, she came in from a walk and went immediately to see how her uncle was. He had just been trying to get about himself a little, for he had been better lately and was able to stroll through the grounds. He had removed his hat and overcoat and slipped on his dressing-gown, but, evidently tired out, had thrown himself into his chair without stopping to take off his shoes.

"How do you feel after your walk, uncle?" asked Ethel, cheerfully.

"Tolerable," answered Mr. Darrell, in his gruff tones. He had opened a book, but laid it on his lap, upon his niece's entrance. "Can you sit down awhile?" he went on. "I want to talk to you."

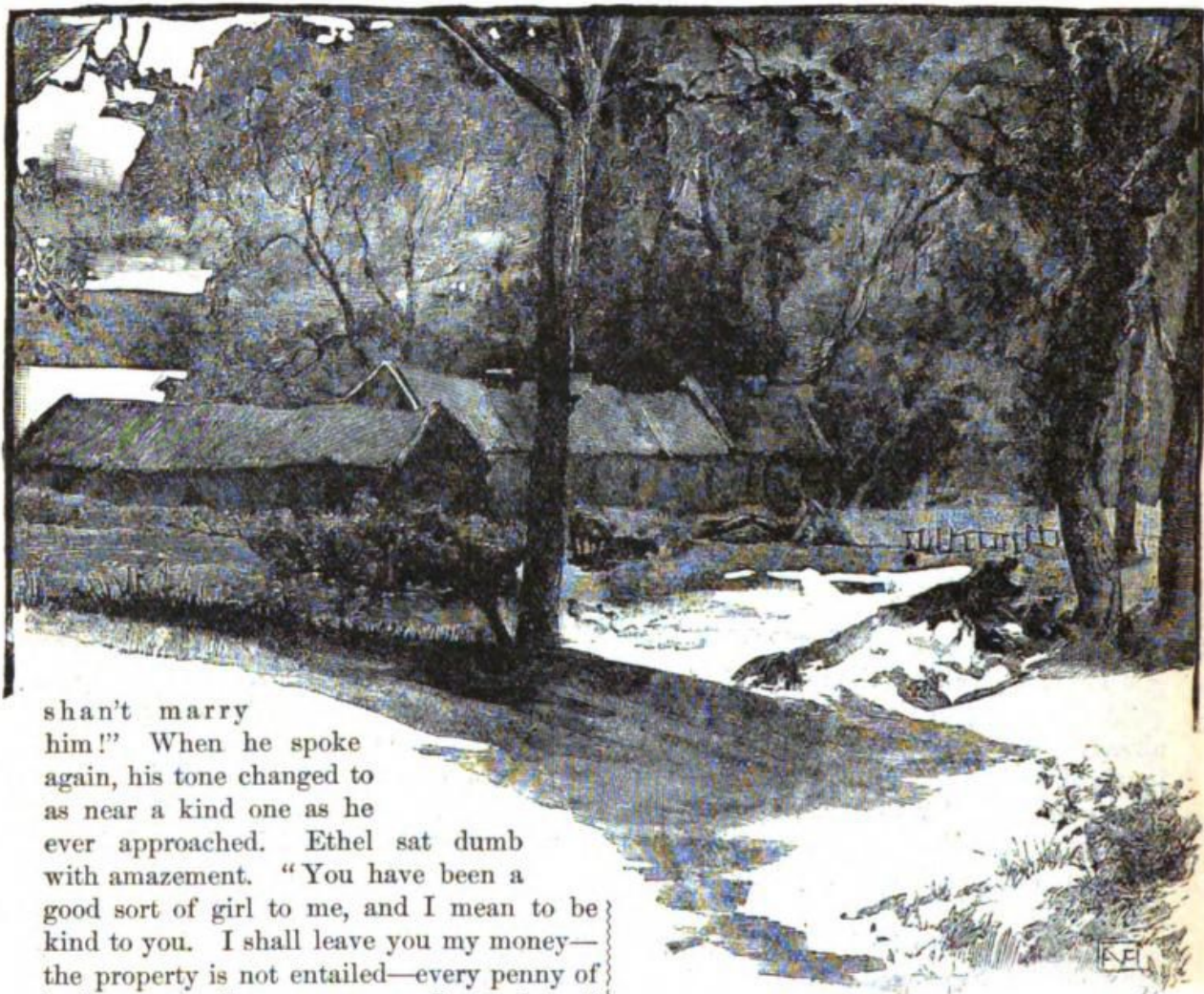
"Certainly," replied Ethel, seating herself near him without stopping to remove her jacket and hat.

Such a long silence followed that she began to feel uncomfortable. She unbuttoned her sacque and pushed it open, for the room was warm, and then her uncle leaned back in his chair and crossed his legs. As he did so, the book on his lap fell to the floor. Ethel would have stooped to pick it up, but he stopped her with a movement of impatience.

"Never mind that now—listen to me," he said. "I want to talk to you about that son of mine." To save her life, Ethel could not have helped blushing, though she knew she had no cause for so doing. The old man noticed the blush and frowned a little. "He's a good-for-nothing, worthless sort of fellow," he continued, bitterly; and, as Ethel put up her hand with a quick indignant gesture, he

hurried on with sudden vehemence: "Don't you defend him—don't contradict me. You are in love with him, or fancy you are; but you shan't marry him. Do you hear? You

luncheon—she could not—and daylight was drawing to a close when there came a knock at the door and a servant handed her a note. She took it, opened it mechanically, and then



shan't marry him!" When he spoke again, his tone changed to as near a kind one as he ever approached. Ethel sat dumb with amazement. "You have been a good sort of girl to me, and I mean to be kind to you. I shall leave you my money—the property is not entailed—every penny of it, if you promise not to marry Lynn; but, if you do, you shall not have a shilling."

"And Lynn—" Ethel's voice was very low.

"Oh, he shan't have it in any case," replied the invalid, in a vindictive tone; "I'm done with him."

Ethel rose proudly. She was deadly pale—there was a look on her face which no one had ever seen there before. All her dormant pride rose to her aid.

"I never thought of marrying your son till this moment, nor he me. Now I am willing, if he is—what you have said to me shows me my mind clearly for the first time."

"Leave the room this minute!" Mr. Darrell almost shrieked, and she obeyed him at once.

Alone in her chamber, she thought over everything her uncle had said, and tried to understand it. She did not go down to

sat down gazing at the lines before her in a dazed fashion.

"MY DEAR COUSIN:

I may call you that—nothing dearer. I am a miserable wretch, not worthy to touch the hem of your garment; but I have dared to love you. Lately I have even fancied that you might grow in time to care a little about me. I have hoped that you would not, for your own sake; to-day I made up my mind that you must not. So I am going away. Drummond, who is far from scrupulous, heard every word that passed between you and my father—he was in a large closet adjoining the dressing-room. I should not have listened to him except that he told me my father's threat, then I wanted to know all. You shall not have the chance of throwing away a fortune

for my sake—I am not worth it. My father will soon forgive you. I have seen him and sworn that I will not marry you. I am going away now—I am too weak to stay; and, besides, it will be best for us both. God bless you!

LYNN."

That was all. Ethel had to read the letter over many times before she understood its meaning or realized what her cousin had done. When she did, she knew that she loved him—and he was gone!

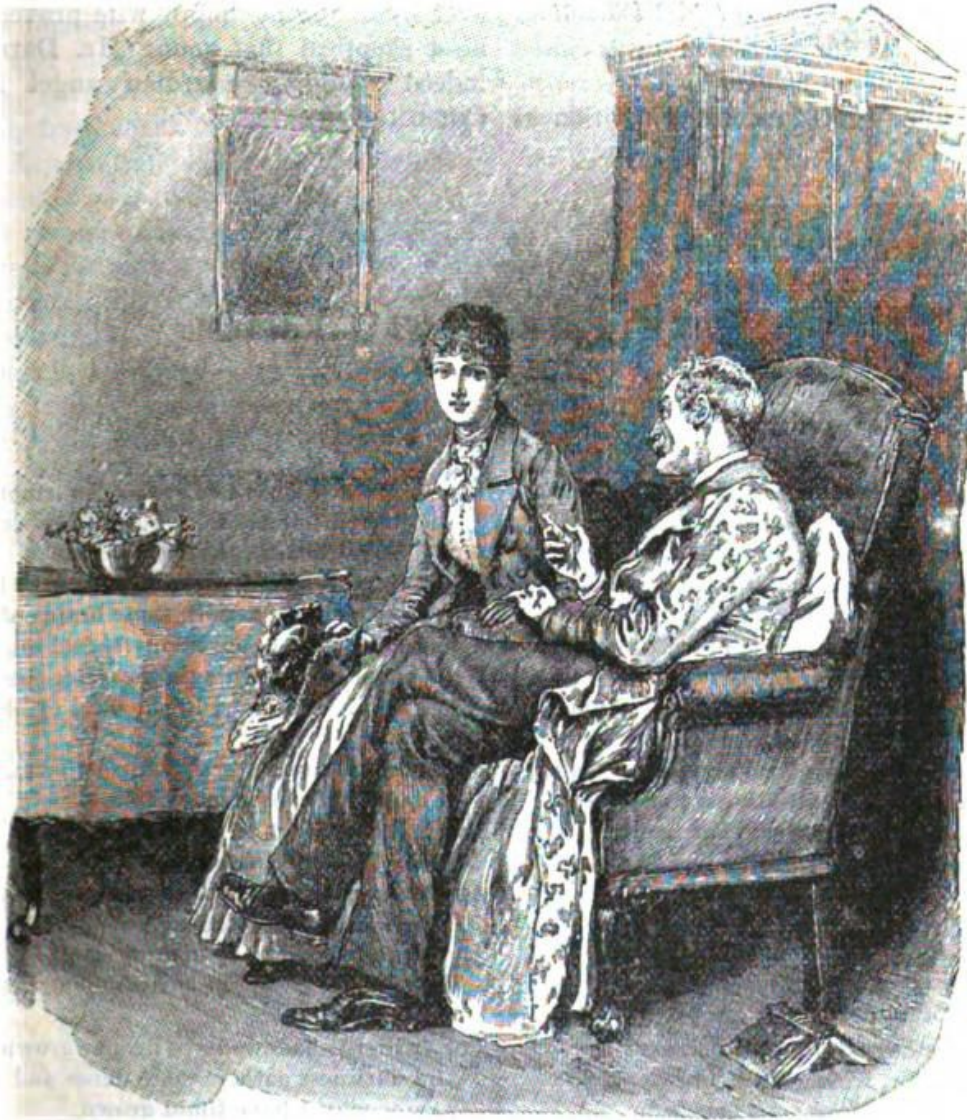
The days passed uneventfully. Mr. Darrell had returned to his usual manner, and never referred to his money. In reply to a question which Ethel ventured, he disclaimed all knowledge of his son's whereabouts, and

wearily along to the lonely girl. In the late spring, she paid a visit to Lady Thornhurst, but returned to her uncle's almost gladly. She was beautiful, and people said she would be that strange old man's heiress; but she did not want suitors, and her friend did not understand.

Once more the ground was white, and Ethel thought of a year previous. She was starting out for her usual walk, when Mr. Darrell's servant came to her with a scared face.

"The master has had another stroke," he said.

It was the end. They sent for doctors and tried every remedy, but without success.



everyone else seemed to be in equal ignorance. Drummond had accompanied his master, and the two seemed to have vanished from the face of the earth. Time dragged

After a few hours of unconsciousness, he was dead and Ethel was alone. She went about in a sort of dream, until the will was read. Even then she did not comprehend. Lady

Thornhurst shook her and gasped: "He has left everything to that miserable son—you don't seem to understand."

But at last she did, and then she was—oh, so glad! She had not supplanted Lynn, after all! Her uncle, in spite of his threats, had not been wicked enough to carry out his cruel purpose. Why or when the old man had changed his intentions toward his son, nobody knew. His lawyer had never made but this one will, though his client had sometimes spoken of making another.

Of course, the next thing was to find the heir, and every means was tried. They inserted advertisements of his good-fortune in all the great European journals, either in England or on the continent, and even in North and South America and Australia, but nothing was heard of either Mr. Darrell or Drummond. So the great house was closed to await news of its owner.

Ethel, while trying to secure a position as

governess, again took up her residence with Lady Thornhurst, who comprehended her less than ever.

Coming out of the park gates one morning, she saw her cousin approaching.

"Lynn!" she cried.

"Ethel!" and their hands clasped.

"I have only just learned that you were deprived of everything—will you let me restore it to you? I am not worthy, dear, but I have tried to become so, the last two years."

"Well, since I can't have you without it, I suppose I'll have to take the money," answered Ethel, smiling up into the handsome face altered infinitely for the better.

And even Lady Thornhurst became reconciled in time. For the years that passed over Lynn and his happy wife proved to the most skeptical that young Mr. Darrell had indeed found a guardian angel in His

COUSIN ETHEL.

IN THE PORTRAIT-ROOM.

BY ARTHUR LEWIS TUBBS.

THROUGH narrow windows the twilight fell,
With just enough of a dingy gloom
To cast about me a mystic spell,
As I stood alone in the dim old room.
From the walls hang portraits, faded now,
Of those who lived in the olden time,
When gallant lovers spoke tender vow
In sweetest rhythm and quaintest rhyme.

From a queer old-fashioned and gilded frame,
Peers a shy young face like a timid rose;
I do not know what may be her name,
Nor what might her pretty lips disclose—
But, deep in her dark eyes' tender shade,
There lies a witching coquettish light,
And I think of her as the fairest maid
Who danced at the ball one summer's night.

There's another face, in a frame near by—
Of a cavalier, with eyes of brown,
Where a shade of sorrow seems to lie,
For they droop and falter and show a frown;
And I fancy he may have been a beau
Who was jilted once by a sad coquette,
Who had pierced his heart with a cruel blow
Which he proudly bore but could not forget.

There are stern-faced soldiers whose armors bright
About their bosoms were gleaming seen;
And I fancy them in the bloody fight,
And hear the clang of their swords so keen.
There are older men, with their braids of hair
And high neck-handkerchiefs, fold on fold.
What queer adornments they used to wear,
The people who lived in the days of old!

There are calmer faces, of matrons prim,
In queer old caps of enormous size;
And I almost seem, in the shadows dim,
To see the blinking of many eyes.
As I view the faces, proud or meek,
I quite forget they are only paint,
And almost listen to hear them speak,
Those silent people in garments quaint.

The twilight shadows have deeper grown,
And darkness gathers more dense and drear;
I wonder why I have timid grown,
As I steal away with a sense of fear:
And I know that over my spirit fell,
Amid the flickering light and gloom,
A silent charm or a mystic spell,
Alone in the dim old portrait-room.

TILDY GRACE'S TEMPTATION.

BY MARION E. PICKERING.



UST depend upon 't, Tildy Grace, Satan's got ye up in a high mountain, an' he's a-p'intin' out the kingdoms o' this world an' the glory on 'em!"

Aunt Seviah compressed her lips and carefully lifted from the glowing range the big preserve-kettle filled nearly to the brim with luscious quartered quinces floating in clear amber syrup.

The girl thus summarily addressed made no sign, save that the bright color flamed suddenly from cheek to brow, and the slender brown fingers trembled as they rounded off great golden coils of paring.

Aunt Seviah brought from the pantry the huge stone jar which, during fifty autumns of housekeeping, had never failed to be filled with her famous apple-quince preserve.

"Your Uncle Moses says to me, last night," pausing to wipe an imaginary speck of dust from the depths of the jar, "says he: 'Seviah, don't ye put a finger in that pie'; but, Tildy Grace, I can't see you, as was my only sister's child, as I've tried to bring up so careful, an' she in her grave nigh on to twenty year—I can't see ye throw yourself away, an' me not speak a word o' warnin'. To be sure, ye do favor your father's family mightily, an' sometimes I think there ain't a drop o' Wareham blood in ye!"

Tildy stooped to hide her flushed face, and refilled her pan from the heaped-up basket beside her.

"It seems to me," she hesitated, "you are taking a great deal for granted. I—I haven't made up my mind yet."

"That's jest it," interposed Aunt Seviah, promptly, as she steadily ladled the steaming fruit from kettle to jar. "There's more truth than poetry in what my old gran'ma'am used to say: 'Parley with Satan, an' you're a goner'!"

Tildy's cheeks glowed again, and her eyes flashed as she replied:

"(One would think I was going to commit

a deadly sin if I accepted Harold Mayburn. Why shouldn't I, pray, if I choose, since he has done me the honor to ask me?"

"Tildy Grace," said Aunt Seviah, solemnly, facing her niece, the ladle slipping from her fingers into the jar, "do you mean to tell me that you love that air man?"

"Nobody said anything about love, that I know of," replied Tildy, with some asperity, paring off thick slices of fruit in her agitation. "Besides, how am I to know?" she added, incoherently. "I'm trying to think it out."

"Think it out!" echoed Aunt Seviah, almost contemptuously. "Tildy Grace, don't ye go an' spile your young life in the very beginnin'. When your Uncle Moses asked me, a matter o' fifty year ago, do ye s'pose I had to think it out? Wasn't I willin' to leave father an' mother an' the old home, an' go with him to the ends o' the airth, an' he no fortin' but his two strong hands? That's the test, Tildy."

Tildy Grace lifted her clouded blue eyes and surveyed the spare energetic figure before her with a new interest. She thought of her easy-going uncle, portly, red-faced, bald—was this, then, the secret of their contentment, jogging on together in what seemed to her such prosy humdrum fashion? She plunged her knife into the heart of another golden ball. "No, she could never care for Harold Mayburn like that."

"Tildy," continued Aunt Seviah, an unwonted softness in her sharp voice, "'tain't merely a fine weddin' an' a harnsome house; there's year arter year comin', that's got to be lived. There's sorer an' triberlation that ye can't escape in this world nohow, an' he ain't the kind o' man ye can lean on when it comes. Ye'll have to see that same evil look o' his dawnin' on the innercent faces o' your childern, an' the same evil ways a-croppin' out in 'em. I tell ye, 'twon't ease the achin' o' your heart then, cause it's covered with a satin gown."

Tildy's head bent lower and lower, but she strove in vain to frame some reply. Aunt Seviah crossed the kitchen and softly stroked

the brown braids with awkward fingers all unaccustomed to caresses.

"Tildy, child, this ain't the Lord's leadin'. If it so be that He wants ye to take up a new life, He'll prepare the way for ye. One mismatch unmatches nobody knows how many more. It's like a stone thrown into the mill-pond—the rings reach clean across; an' what the Lord meant for a fair piece o' work becomes all higgledy-piggledy. Don't ye take it on yourself to snarl up His pattern like that. S'pose'n' ye meet the one of His app'intin', an' it's too late, Tildy Grace!"

With a swift motion, Tildy deposited her pan of quinces on the table and rushed up the stairway to her own room.

Aunt Seviah straightened herself and mechanically smoothed out her apron. "Wal, come what will, my duty's done; but I jest wish that dissipated young feller had staid in New York, an' never come bewitchin' Tildy with his di'monds an' fast horses."

"Oh, dear!" moaned Tildy, in her little chamber above, "it does seem to me there is no getting away from this narrow miserable life. How I detest it all—" the little brown hands tightly clenched in her lap—"the dish-washing, and potato-peeling, and churning, and scrubbing, forever and ever! It may be wicked, but I long to live with refined people; and it seems so ungrateful to dear old uncle and auntie even to think of it. And oh, I do hate to be called Tildy Grace."

She knelt by the window and looked away to the hills shutting in the farm valley—just as her life was hedged about, she pondered.

"It seems too bad, when good-fortune offers, that I cannot be free to accept it. Who would have imagined Aunt Seviah could be so sentimental? I'm sure Mr. Mayburn is very fond of me, and every girl in Mapleton envies me."

Tildy unconsciously bridled her head as she recalled the drives in the dashing city turn-out. "There would be the concerts and the art-galleries: I could go to all the delightful places in summer, and he more than hinted of a tour in Europe by and by. It's sheer flying in the face of Providence, to let such a chance slip, and I don't intend to do it."

Tildy rose determinedly, bathed her eyes at the little rickety wash-stand, and loosened

the thick braids of brown hair before the quaint brass-framed mirror.

Suddenly, from the very air, the homely sentences that fell from her aunt's lips seemed to re-echo. A great light dawned on her, showing in its true color the fearful sacrifice she was about to make of her whole future. Tildy threw herself on her knees beside the low bed whereon she had slept from childhood.

"Lord, Thou hast delivered me. Help me to put far from me this thing, which never was and never could be mine."

The guests at the Mapleton House were sauntering out of the spacious dining-room and dispersing to their several apartments. Stately Mrs. Mayburn leisurely ascended the broad stairway, accompanied by her two elegant daughters, pausing now and then to nod graciously or exchange greetings with her acquaintances and friends. As she entered her private parlor, a messenger handed her an ominous yellow envelope. She tore it open with the aplomb of the woman of the world to whom a telegram is an everyday occurrence and not the harbinger of terror it almost invariably proves to less accustomed receivers.

"Ah!" said she, scanning the brief message through her glass. "Harold cannot join us to-night, and he begs me to see Miss Warner, with whom he had an engagement to drive this afternoon."

"It seems to me, mamma," said Edith, slowly trailing her silken skirts before the long mirror, "this affair with Miss Warner really begins to look serious."

"She is extremely pretty," drawled Madeline, the younger sister, sinking languidly into an easy-chair, "but hardly a suitable match for Harold. You will discourage it, will you not, mamma?"

Mrs. Mayburn thoughtfully stripped the telegram into bits, and sifted the floating pieces through her white ringed fingers. "No, girls, I shall do nothing of the kind. You are well aware that Harold has been growing more and more reckless during the past year or two. This fancy for Miss Warner seems to have taken deep hold of him, and I hope much from her influence. No," she added, conclusively, "I shall not oppose it."

"Suppose he breaks her heart, mamma?" questioned Madeline, toying with her fan.

"Pshaw!" ejaculated Edith, pacing up and

down. "The position will amply compensate—it will be a great match for her. As mamma says, Harold is getting fearfully wild, and I agree that it is best to let it go on."

"Well," said Mrs. Mayburn, quietly ignoring Edith's retort and collecting her scattered papers, "I shall drive over to see Miss Warner. Will you accompany me?"

"Not I," replied Edith, arranging a handful of glowing asters in her belt; "I drive Colonel Mackay's tandem at five; but never mind: when she is actually Harold's fiancée, I'll cultivate her."

"And I," yawned Madeline, "join the tennis-party at the Wetomanuc House. You will have to go alone, mamma."

"Very well," replied Mrs. Mayburn, pulling the bell; "then I will order the ponies."

A few minutes later, she stepped gracefully into her basket-carriage, gathered up the ribbons in her slim gauntleted hands, and bowled swiftly down the village street, the admired of all observers.

She still retained the freshness and elasticity of youth, and few glancing at the fair placid face and graceful figure could believe her to be the mother of her tall son and daughters.

She drew rein at the farm-house gate, and her face lighted up with satisfaction when she saw the slight girlish figure already advancing from the shady porch.

"She'll never disgrace him," the mother thought. "Thoroughly well dressed, she'll be positively fascinating. What a sensation she'll make in our set!"

Tildy had donned a simple gown of clinging creamy material, adorned at the waist with a great cluster of the late-blooming scarlet honeysuckle. A dainty hat drooped over her wavy brown hair, brushed fluffily back from the delicate face, a face lifted now in some bewilderment to the unexpected occupant of the carriage.

Mrs. Mayburn beckoned her graciously to the seat by her side.

"My son was unexpectedly detained in New York," she said, softly, "so I have come, instead, at his request." Tildy, flushing, half in awe of the stately lady, half in pride and pleasure at her condescension, timidly seated herself by the lady's side. The ponies tossed their heads gayly, and at a word trotted briskly down the wooded road.

"Humph!" groaned Aunt Seviah, peering

through the kitchen-blind. "I s'pose that matter's as good as settled!"

"Never ye fret, Sevy," drawled Uncle Moses, carefully filling his pipe and pressing the contents into the bowl with his big red forefinger. "Why can't ye leave things to Providence, instid of allus takin' it on yer-self to settle 'em? Ye can't regerate all creation."

"Moses Linton," ejaculated Aunt Seviah, solemnly, "don't ye slander the Lord in no sich fashion. He hain't nuthin' to do with sich goin's on!"

Uncle Moses subsided, stumped heavily out to the porch, lighted his pipe, tilted back, and contemplated the rings of smoke in philosophical silence.

The carriage rolled swiftly along under the birches quivering in the afternoon light, their slender white trunks gleaming through the pale foliage, the silence unbroken save by the sound of the ponies' hoofs. As they approached Pine Hill, Mrs. Mayburn loosened the reins and glanced down kindly at the quiet figure by her side.

"My son was sadly disappointed that he could not get back, Miss Warner."

Tildy moved uneasily and looked shyly upward, but no answer was forthcoming.

"He has told me everything, and I hope you will be kind to my boy," added Mrs. Mayburn, softly.

The girl again raised her troubled eyes to the pleasant face bending toward her. "Mrs. Mayburn," she said, tremulously, locking her fingers tightly together, "may I ask you a question that under other circumstances might seem impertinent?"

"You may ask me anything you please, my child," responded the lady benignantly, yet not without a secret wonderment as to the purport of the girl's words.

"It is this," hesitated Tildy, carefully steadying her voice along the syllables: "did you love your husband when you promised to marry him, Mrs. Mayburn?"

The elder lady started slightly, shaken from her customary well-bred self-possession. She remained silent for a moment and then said:

"My dear, perhaps you do not know that my husband was many years my senior—a man who was a power in the business world, well able to give his wife a fitting position in society and a suitable establishment. It was

thought by my parents to be a most excellent match for me, and I was guided entirely by their judgment and counsel. Those of us who have reached middle life can decide far better, in such matters, than a romantic girl dazzled by dreams—natural to her age, to be sure, but unsubstantial and transient nevertheless."

Mrs. Mayburn glanced at the girl's face, but the brown eyes seemed to look through and beyond her, far down the vista of the coming years. Was life like that, after all?

"Mrs. Mayburn," she said, quietly, "what I ask may seem to you unpardonable. I have reason to believe that your son is dissipated. It is an ugly word—forgive me."

Mrs. Mayburn reined in the ponies under the huge pine-trees at the hill-top, and laid her hand reassuringly on the girl's arm.

"My child, it would be useless for me to deny—in fact, it is perhaps better that you should know the exact truth. Harold has given us some anxiety during the past few years. New York life offers many temptations, and his associates, though belonging to the first families, are many of them fast young men. Yes, I confess, he uses wine far too freely. No doubt this seems very shocking to you, in your quiet innocent life; but let me assure you, out of my long experience, it is nothing uncommon. After he has sown his wild oats, I trust he will settle down into a steady family-man. I hope everything from your influence. He has had many fancies, but nothing like the fervent attachment he feels for you. You are charming and very beautiful, my child, and I truly believe you can win him back—and he can give you much."

"You mean," interposed the girl, uncompromisingly, with her gaze still uplifted to her companion, "that, in spite of his bad habits, his wealth and position will offset what you are pleased to call my—beauty."

The elder lady winced slightly. "You are very frank—yes, I may as well acknowledge that is what I had in my mind."

"And, if I should fail to win him back, there would be the wealth and position as compensation," persisted Tildy.

"Yes," responded the other, "and I assure you a woman's life can never be empty where there is the means of culture and travel at her hand. You will come to us?" persuasively.

Tildy looked off on the wide scene, half cloud, half sunshine, spread before her. Again Aunt Sevia's homely words rang in her ear: "Satan's got ye on a high mountain, an' he's p'intin' out the kingdoms o' this world an' the glory on 'em. S'pose ye realize too late."

She gazed almost in horror at the fair pleading woman beside her. Better a thousand times drudgery, limitation, loneliness, anything, rather than this sin of which she was sorely tempted to be guilty—this separating herself from all possible future joy.

"Oh, Mrs. Mayburn, never!" she ejaculated, the tears springing to her relief. "Don't you see it is not mine to take, this life that tempts me so?"

Lines of pain deepened on the face of the elder woman as she mechanically turned the ponies homeward. An inarticulate sob burst from her, and she faltered: "Miss Warner, consider—a mother will even humiliate herself to beseech you, since you hold the future welfare of her only son in your hands."

But a strange composure had taken possession of the girl; everything was plain and clear before her.

"No, Mrs. Mayburn," she said, with gentle dignity. "You are his mother—it is your work. God helping me, I will never do this thing."

A silence fell again upon the two, as they sped back through the shaded wood-road. As Tildy alighted at the farm-gate, Mrs. Mayburn clasped her hand in a warm lingering pressure.

"You are a brave girl," she said. "I wish he had been worthy of you."

Harold Mayburn received his refusal through his mother. She wrote him a long letter that night, a letter which awoke glowing visions of a possible "might be"; but, alas! the good resolutions were of too feeble growth to reach maturity. The old temptations allured him onward. He did not appear in Mapleton again during the stay of his family there.

"Well," remarked Edith, a few days later, "Harold's fancy for Miss Warner seems to have followed his thousand other likings. I was really deluded into regarding it as a settled affair."

A spasm of pain flitted over Mrs. Mayburn's smooth forehead.

"It seems to have been only a passing attraction," she replied, in measured tones.

"Well, it would have been a mésalliance at best," said Madeline. "It will be better if he chooses a wife in our own circle."

"No doubt you are right, my dear," replied her mother, with studied indifference.

"The old Wareham common-sense won the day," commented Aunt Seviah. "The child's got it in her, arter all!"

"I told ye there's no need o' frettin', Sevy," said Uncle Moses, unfolding the evening paper, "ef ye'd only give natur' a chance to work."

"Wal, I dunno but you're right, Moses," replied his helpmate, with unusual submission; "but, somehow, I can't refrain from—assistin'!"

The days moved on in their usual monotonous round, at the homestead. Tildy entered heart and soul into the once despised household work. Aunt Seviah treated her with a certain respect, and a new bond of sympathy seemed to have been established between the practical woman and the dreamy girl. The snow blanketed the hills and wrapped the valley for its winter rest. Over in the village there were many changes. The summer guests had long since flitted away, the Mapleton House was closed.

Dr. Upham, who for a quarter of a century had ministered to the little flock that assembled weekly in the weather-beaten church, had been suddenly gathered to his fathers. Good motherly Mrs. Upham, rendered almost helpless by the unexpected blow, had been taken to her daughter's home, twenty miles away, to be cared for and comforted. For the first time in many years, the hospitable doors of the old parsonage were closed, and the windows that had been a beacon-light to many a poor wanderer were closely shuttered and looked blankly down on the deserted garden-path. The new minister was unmarried, a young man recently ordained. The great rambling parsonage would be an incumbrance to him. All he wanted was a comfortable chamber and study. Uncle Moses Linton, for many years deacon of the church, was commissioned to find a suitable accommodation for the new preacher. He pondered the matter in his deliberate fashion on the way home, and decided on a course of action.

"Mighty hard findin' a boardin'-place for

that air young minister, I'm thinkin'," said he, diplomatically, as he sipped the huge bowl of ginger-tea Aunt Seviah always prepared when unusual circumstances called him out of an evening.

"There's Widder Green!" Aunt Seviah threw out the suggestion between-times, as she "flew round" seeing that bolts and bars were safely adjusted for the night.

"Ain't good enough cook. Poor feed makes poor sermons," after a prolonged draught of the steaming tea.

"Polly Thorp, then!" said Aunt Seviah, politely showing the cat the door into the back kitchen, wherein was her basket for the night.

"Ain't room to turn round now, in her box of a house, an' her childern raise Cain. You don't s'pose, Sevy," fixing his little twinkling eyes on his energetic helpmate and slowly stirring the fragrant beverage, "you couldn't give him house-room for a spell—now, could ye?"

"Wal, there's room enough—if that's all; he might have the south chamber, and the little room off for his books an' fixins'. As for cookin', there's allus enough and to spare. It's kinder sanctifyin' to have a preacher round. I dunno but I'll let him come for the winter, anyhow."

"That worked well!" chuckled Uncle Moses to himself. "Sevy thinks it's her idee."

With Aunt Seviah, to plan was to carry out. A new stove was speedily set up in the little room, a crimson carpet tacked down, a couple of easy-chairs transferred thither, and, by the next Saturday night, the Reverend Mr. Morton was established therein, with all his belongings.

The minister's advent was the beginning of a new life for Tildy. The latest magazines, reviews, and books somehow always happened to be left on the sitting-room table, instead of being relegated to the study upstairs. The minister found this girl with the dreamy eyes and thoughtful face a curiously interesting study. Day by day, he understood better the fine sensitive nature, hedged in by circumstances, struggling bravely for the higher life and forcing itself to be content. Perhaps the sermons gained somewhat in vigor because the preacher was conscious of one absorbed listener who waited intently for the message

her soul craved. The second summer of the Reverend Mr. Morton's stay in Mapleton rested in its June freshness on the hills. The parsonage was again thrown open, for it was meet that it should be the minister's residence, since the only objection thereto was now removed. Once more a busy happy woman flitted from room to room, drawing aside curtains that the sweet summer air and sunshine might wander through the old rooms, banishing all traces of solitude and mustiness.

"Grace," said the minister, pausing beside his wife, as she leaned from the sunny south window and drew in a branch of climbing roses, which filled the air with fragrance, "the same hills shut you in here—and yet you are sure you will be content, my darling?"

She looked up with happy eyes.

"Not a doubt remains. If I think of them

at all, it is as the gates to a beautiful beyond for you and me."

"And yet," he continued, musingly, "life might have been so different for you."

She glanced up quickly.

"Aunt Seviah should not have repeated that to you. I was weak and foolish in the old days."

"No, Grace—not foolish, but longing unutterably for better things," replied her husband, fondly.

"I should really like to know, Edward, how you divined that my name was so utterly distasteful to me, and gave it the only Grace-ful rendering possible."

"Believe me, it was never distasteful to me," replied the minister, earnestly: "Matilda—a brave woman; Grace—the grace of God!"

"Oh, I never translated it so!" cried Tildy, with brimming eyes.

DRIFTING.

BY LILLA PRICE.

In oarless boat, alone and sad,
Adown an ocean dark and deep,
I float adrift the waters vast,
And dream of home and rest and sleep.

The sun hangs low, and flings a maze
Of red-gold bars athwart the sky,
And gilds the purpling clouds that seem
To frame the gates of "by and by."

And, as I gaze and drift and dream,
Bright days ago my thoughts engage,
And mem'ry holds before my view
A picture from her fairest page.

I see the waters blue and calm,
My life's boat oared by faith and love—

A fond face smiling from the helm,
A bright and cloudless sky above.

E'en as I look, the scene dissolves—
The sky with clouds is overcast,
And gloom-browed present rudely routs
The sun-bright vision of the past.

The shades are falling, falling low,
And twilight's pall will shroud the night;
And still anent the dark'ning waves
I drift, and wait the coming light.

I drift toward a future vague—
Life's tide is ebbing, ebbing fast;
And never can my barque return
Upon the ocean of the past.

A LOYAL LITTLE LOVER.

BY LILLIAN GREY.

"I'm going to send a valentine!"
Said Hal unto his younger brother.
"Why don't you send one, too?" said Tom.
"I will; I'll send one to my mother."

"Oh, what a baby-boy!" cried Hal;
"I'm 'shamed to own you for a brother."

"That makes no difference," said Tom:
"I'll send my valentine to mother."

And so he did. He sought and sought,
To find one fairer than another;
And proudest boy in town was he
Who sent his valentine to mother.